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An Approach to Punctuation

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INSTRUCTORS who have had the opportunity of teaching ex-service men have probably noticed their intellectual alertness and curiosity. As students, they do not sit in the pre-war boredom of merely submitting themselves to the efforts of the instructor, but alert and eager they challenge every new or old principle that is presented to them. Fortunately, however, they challenge not with the intention of refusing or rejecting, but rather with that of ultimately accepting. But before they approve and accept they insist upon knowing *why* the principle is true and *how* the knowledge will aid them. Nor are they satisfied when the instructor says, "But it's a rule!" or refers the questioner to an authority whose name formerly acted as a not-to-be-questioned guarantee; they must know the reasoning behind the rule, the thinking process by which the authority reached his generalization. Dubious, questioning, skeptical in the best sense, they are in truth following Huxley's dictum of decades ago pronounced of the would-be scholar's attitude toward science in general but applicable to science in particular, even to the science of punctuation: "Skepticism is the highest of duties; blind faith the one unpardonable sin."

This attitude on the part of our young students should suggest to the rhetoric teacher that too often he has proceeded in the wrong way when he has given his young charges rules for inserting commas and dashes and semicolons and periods and all the other hieroglyphics of the craft, and has insisted that the students memorize them. Rules are the composite of others' discoveries; as such, they are impersonal and seemingly unrelated to the students' individual needs. They are couched in general, often ambiguous terms, surprisingly close to jargon, so that all specific cases which may arise in a lifetime of use will be covered. But what young

person is going to take time to recall all the rules for the use of the comma and the semicolon and the period when he finds himself writing as he would speak, pausing here, stopping there, perhaps questioning somewhere else? He must use some marks of punctuation that he may be understood or comprehended, but instead of memorizing rules, he needs to develop a feeling for and a recognition of the value of each symbol, what it stands for to the reader even more perhaps than to himself, and he needs to use the correct mark instinctively. Yet our handbooks and textbooks continue to abound in rules. There follow examples to illustrate the use of the rule, and exercises to afford practice. The examples and exercises, however, are often so senseless and divorced from the student's immediate use and need that he does not carry over from book to theme any guide for his difficulty. In correcting papers, the instructor usually refers the student to a rule—221g, Pf., p. 584—using such symbols as complicate rather than simplify the situation. Some old-fashioned instructors insist not only that the erring student should look up the rule in his textbook and repunctuate the place in question, using red ink, but that he copy the rule on the back of his paper, once, twice, thrice, as a punishment for his negligence. The emphasis is on the rule and the culprit's infraction of it. What seems to be important to the student is the rule; what should be important is quite simply that the student has not made himself understood, that he has not availed himself of marks which make communication possible, that he has failed to give the correct signal to his reader.

For commas, semicolons, question marks, exclamation points, colons, dashes, and periods are signals, no more and no less. They indicate turns, pauses, stops—dubious or definite, slight or emphatic—quite as much as the left hand of the motorist when he uses it intelligently and courteously to show those following him what he is to do and what, accordingly, they should prepare to do. Substitute this conception of punctuation as an intelligent, courteous signal to the reader for the rules in Genung or Woolley or Harbrace and one of life's problems for the freshman will be greatly simplified and perhaps even altogether solved.

As an initial step the student should be shown—not told—how punctuation guides and assists the reader. Give the student a paragraph from which all punctuation marks have been removed and ask him to read it aloud. After the first few words he will be helpless, floundering in a morass of words without anything to grasp for support. Hand him the same paragraph with periods

inserted at the end of the sentences, and he will have a few poles to grasp, but still, if the sentences are other than extremely simple ones, he will find himself clumsily stumbling. Then hand him the paragraph fully punctuated and he will read it with ease, comprehending, too, the thought of the writer. For this initial exhibit of the value and the necessity of punctuation, it is well to take paragraphs from magazines in order that the student may observe punctuation in everyday use. Paragraphs from *Time*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, magazines of varied style and complexity, will show him that punctuation is the needed servant of all. He will discover that a paragraph from *The Atlantic Monthly*, adequately punctuated, may be as easily read and comprehended as the condensation of it in *The Reader's Digest*.

The student may also be asked to read aloud a paragraph written by a fellow student, a paragraph which has been misleadingly—I do not say wrongly lest the existence of a rule be implied—punctuated, or left without needed signals. As the reader stumbles in reading it aloud, the student who wrote it will realize where he has failed to signal properly and will cast about in his mind for ways to remedy his mistake. Of perhaps more significant value to both students, they may be given paragraphs from examination papers of the essay type and told to read them. They will see all too plainly where the failure to punctuate, for students punctuate but scantily in examinations, has resulted in sentences which are meaningless or meaningful in a way quite other than was intended.

Suggest also that the students try to hear punctuation, for actually punctuation can be noted by ear as well as by eye. Let them listen to a speech over the radio and note the pauses made by the speaker. As they listen, suggest that they mentally time each pause and think of the kind of punctuation mark—comma, semicolon, period, the three degrees in regular pauses—indicated by the brevity or length of the pause. Is there merely the briefest of pauses, or a more definite one without, however, any dropping of the voice? Is there a stop? Is there, following a slight pause, not a dropping of the voice, but a shifting of it? If such is the case, will a comma or semicolon suffice, or must some other mark—say a dash—be in order as something explanatory or slightly to the side is brought in? And how are questions where the voice remains elevated to be indicated? Recordings of famous speeches may be listened to and correlated with the printed speeches. Ordinary conversation may be listened to, and its erratic, uncertain, quickly shifting tempo may, if the student thinks about the pauses and the shifts, illustrate

to him the need of some gesture of the pen, some mark of punctuation, to denote the inflection of the voice if the speech is to be recorded on paper. From such attention punctuation may emerge as more meaningful than words, for it *suggests*; it is a means of getting across to another mind what is in the speaker's mind, with all the shades and implications, and his emotions as well.

Then to show the full value of punctuation, have the student consider some of the great works of literature which he is perhaps reading in an introductory English literature course and which he would find nothing but "words, words, words" were it not for punctuation, whether it was originally there or, more likely, has been supplied by editors endeavoring to suggest the writer's meaning and to make it understandable to the modern reader. Consider Hamlet's long, meditative soliloquy "To be, or not to be: that is the question." Note how the punctuation guides the inflection, assists the interpretation. Consider the simpler but effective exhortation of Henry V to his soldiers at Agincourt as imagined by Shakespeare. Consider the dramatic monologues of Browning, "My Last Duchess" and the more difficult but startlingly effective "Fra Lippo Lippi" as the police catch up with the sportive monk and detain him. Consider the speeches of the fallen angels in Book II of *Paradise Lost*, each proposing a different course of action, each coming from a different personality, each so suggestive of similar type of oratory as used by our politicians today. Consider the prose of any well known writer—Matthew Arnold, Bacon, Sinclair Lewis, Hemingway, even Saroyan, for the simple as well as the difficult, the modern as well as the traditional, must be considered if punctuation in all its reaches is to be understood. Punctuation, the student will see, often a matter of fancy rather than of rule and stereotyped practice, is needed by all writers—or at least by the editors—if the meaning is to be carried to the reader; and punctuation is needed by the reader if he is to comprehend the words he is looking at.

Perhaps if, in the lower grades, there were more time devoted to reading aloud, the student would have noted much earlier the function of punctuation marks. He would then have carried over into his writing a notion of how and when certain marks can be used to indicate pauses and shifts. Of late, however, the emphasis in reading has seemingly shifted from quality to quantity. The attempt to speed up comprehension and grasp of matter has resulted in the neglect of manner and the disregard of how a point is presented. A page is skimmed. Key words are noted. Punctuation is

treated as if non-existent, yet it is important even to the adept skimmer in indicating endings of sentences and beginnings of new ones. But the student is urged to read so swiftly, his eye endeavoring to absorb a page rather than a line or a phrase at a time, that he derives no help for his own expression when he turns from reading to writing. The modulations, the fluctuations of thought, the careful, precise balancing of point with point which mature, adult expression of involved ideas calls for, is disregarded. Could we once more slow down reading and make the student realize that *how* a thing is said is really very important in the communication of facts and ideas, could we recognize that good expression—and this includes punctuation—is contagious to receptive individuals, our level of expression would go up. Attention to comprehension and expression should go hand in hand; neither should be allowed to outstrip the other.

From observing how punctuation has served others, the student should turn to consider the use it may serve him. He should be urged to ponder mentally for a moment what he says, noting his pauses and stops, instinctive but meaningful and in need of some signal to the reader if they are to be recorded and comprehended. It may be necessary to give some time to weighing, even to timing, the relative values of commas, semicolons, and periods. The music student will help as he suggests the parallelism of punctuation and rests in music, and listening to a piece of music with its pauses and inflections, with its phrases and stops and transitions may suggest to the student something of the merit of various marks as signals, and the need for different kinds.

At first the student should be urged to write as he would speak, preserving by means of punctuation symbols his pauses and shifts and stops, distinguishing his intensive remarks from his ordinary statements by exclamation points, indicating his asides by dashes. Suggest perhaps that the student write a letter to a young friend describing a game or his difficulties registering, for the friendly epistolary style may reflect the conversational, and the topic should be one he can freely expatiate upon. It may be objected that such a method of alerting the student to the value of each punctuation mark will result in excessively mannered and individual punctuation. The school girl may use dashes and exclamation points as freely on paper as she does in speech and feel justified in so doing. Temporarily she is to be commended if she does this, for she is catching on to the reason for punctuation. But if, shortly, a word is advanced about the objectionable features of a staccato style, of

an explosive manner whether oral or written, the student may correct her speaking habits at the same time she is wrestling with her written expression.

From the informal letter style, turn to simple narrative, stressing the fact that the student is to *narrate*, not just state, that he is to present a succession of events—his experiences the first afternoon on the campus perhaps. Punctuation may be very sparsely needed; possibly periods will serve with an occasional comma as phrases or dependent, qualifying clauses are tacked on to simple sentences. Rapidity and ease of narration should be urged, and the resultant account tested for such as it is read aloud by another student. The punctuation marks accordingly should not actually hinder the reading, interposing stops as what has preceded may seem to suggest. They should rather speed up the reading by thrusting together in units, the groups of words which go together. Thus another conception of the function of punctuation is brought in.

From narration turn to exposition, less emotional, more involved as explanations are attempted. Again the subject should be one the student is familiar with and conversant upon so that he may not be at a loss for something to say; the more he knows about the subject, the fuller and more carefully detailed his explanation will be. The punctuation, accordingly, will be more frequent, and perhaps here at last the full value of punctuation marks will begin to make itself apparent to the student. Semicolons and colons as well as periods and commas will be required, and all the varied situations which call for one or the other will—if the student continues to write expository themes for a semester—come to his attention. In correcting such themes, if the punctuation needs correcting, the instructor may encircle the dubious place and put a question mark in the margin of the paper, thus asking the student if everything in this particular place is quite right, suggesting to him that he may be misleading the reader by failing to signal a pause or a change of tone, or by indicating the wrong turn or shift. Keep before the student the idea of the intelligent, courteous signal, and make him decide for himself what signal will best serve him and his reader.

With such a common sense approach, the study of punctuation can be greatly simplified. Take, for instance, the matter of the comma with non-restrictive clauses. If the student is following a handbook, he must know not only the rule for the use of the comma in such a place but he must also know what a non-restrictive clause

is, and to recognize that indubitably, he must know what a restrictive clause is, and perhaps also what a dependent clause is, and so on till he is quite confused by technicalities. Let him rather simply look at his own sentence which contains such a non-restrictive clause, though he need not be expected to recognize it as such; let him consider whether the group of words belongs to the whole sentence or is something inserted, favored with a slight pause and a shifting of emphasis when it is read aloud. Should there not be some indication to the reader that he may catch the inflection?

The second comma in the a, b, and c series—should or shouldn't it be there?—invariably causes an argument in a freshman class in college rhetoric where students have come from previous teachers who administered—and never explained—one or the other rule. Urge the student to forget the rule he has been encumbered with and use his common sense. Have him read a series of such phrases: a, b, and c; Tom, Dick, and Harry; our flag is red, white, and blue. The question will be settled, I hope, not by any rule, nor by the practice of any ultra-modern publication which is going in for simplification, but by the fact that the student hears and sees a, b, c; Tom, Dick, Harry; red, white, blue, as, in each case, three distinct, three equal items, whereas if the last two are run together, the equality is lost.

The correction of such an abuse as the so-called and mis-named "comma fault," where the comma has been used and a semicolon should have been, can easily be explained by giving the student two versions of a compound sentence, one with a conjunction, one without:

John voted for Roosevelt; Jack voted for Dewey.

John voted for Roosevelt, but Jack voted for Dewey.

Urge the student to note the pause in each sentence, to time it. In the first sentence, he will see or, perhaps better, will hear a real pause, necessary in order to get the proper emphasis upon Jack, whereas in the second sentence the presence of the conjunction acts as a half bridge and shortens, but does not obliterate, the pause. To illustrate other parallelisms of pauses and signals, the sentence can be further changed:

John voted for Roosevelt; however, Jack voted for Dewey.
Or better:

John voted for Roosevelt; Jack, however, voted for Dewey.
And to explain the difference in punctuating compound and complex sentences, consider the following variations:

When (although, because, if) John voted for Roosevelt, Jack voted for Dewey.

The correction of the "fragmentary" or incomplete sentence responds readily to the same treatment. The student who reads aloud a fragment notes its incompleteness, its failure to say anything. His voice remains in the air, and no thought has been completed. Casting about for the meaning, the student may perceive that the fragment does not go with what follows but with what precedes; it is, in fact, an explanatory phrase added as an afterthought or detached postscript, and it needs to be attached to what precedes. The error is not that it, the fragment, has been followed by a period, as some textbooks state, calling such an error the "period fault," but that the preceding sentence has been closed, i. e. punctuated with a period, before the writer was really through with it. The remedy is not to repunctuate the fragment nor to recast it into a full sentence, as some textbooks and instructors would advise, but to change the signal which precedes it to one which indicates a pause but not a stop.

These suggestions are, of course, not presented as a complete substitute for the rules of punctuation in the handbooks though they may be so regarded if the student is satisfied to stop at this place. The purpose, however, is not to solve the whole problem of punctuation for the student, but to enable him to solve it for himself, extending also to apostrophes and quotation marks, to parentheses and brackets the principle that each is a signal to the reader. From this approach most students will turn to their textbooks with greater interest, if only to see if the suggestions made here and the rules in their text actually concur. They will wish, too, to test the underlying assumption that a recognition of the value of each mark of punctuation will serve them quite as well as memorizing the scores of rules formulated by the authorities. At the same time they will, perhaps, have learned a new respect for rules, which are, it should be pointed out, experience consolidated and thus of value, if we are to progress, profiting by the experience of our forebears.

An Analysis of the Spelling Errors of College Freshmen

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MISSPELLED words found in University of Illinois Rhetoric 2 final examination papers form the basis for this analysis. In most of the past investigations of spelling errors, certain lists of words were pronounced to the pupils, whereas in this study the misspelled words were taken from impromptu themes written without the aid of a dictionary or textbook. The students themselves chose the words which they misspelled.

After several methods of classifying errors had been examined, a modified form of Master's classification (17, p. 80) was chosen because the clearly defined categories eliminate subjective judgment. Table 1 shows seven major groups of errors: omissions, insertions, transpositions, confusions, doubling, use of wrong word, and violation of rules. Each of these groups has sub-topics which give detailed tabulations. When a word has two types of errors, it is included in both classifications. For example, *villainous* is misspelled *villianeous*. It appears under "transposition of letters" and under "insertion of letters other than doubling." Table 2 shows the percentages of phonetic and non-phonetic spellings for each of the classifications of errors shown in Table 1.

Fernald (8, p. 183) concluded that "All the investigations of the last few years indicate that . . . any child of normal intelligence can learn to spell with very little difficulty in a reasonable length of time." The purpose of this investigation is to focus attention on 1,108 errors actually made by college students and to determine what teaching methods and what student efforts could have prevented these misspellings.

These questions are worthy of consideration:

1. How many of the errors can be attributed to carelessness or so-called "slips of the pen"? Have we tolerated slovenly work to the point that students do not verify their spelling and punctuation by careful proof-reading?
2. Have we sufficiently taught phonetic principles and the history of the English language?
3. Have we effectively taught students to apply a few major spelling rules?

In discussing spelling rules, Horn (13, p. 1176) states that we should teach only those rules which apply to a large number of words and have few exceptions, such as these four rules:

1. Words ending in silent *e* usually drop the final *e* before the addition of suffixes beginning with a vowel, but they keep the final *e* before the addition of suffixes beginning with a consonant.

2. When a word ends in a consonant and *y*, change the *y* to *i* before all suffixes except those beginning with *i*. Do not change *y* to *i* in adding suffixes to words ending in a vowel and *y*, or when adding a suffix beginning with *i*.

3. Words of one syllable or words of more than one syllable accented on the last, ending in a single consonant preceded by a single vowel, double the final consonant when adding a suffix beginning with a vowel.

4. Use the apostrophe to show possession or the omission of letters in contractions.

With the above questions in mind, we shall discuss the data presented in Table 1. The omission of letters caused 22.7% of the 1,108 spelling errors. The letters *e* and *i* are the most frequently omitted vowels (*e* 49% and *i* 27%). The vowel *u* is omitted in only three words. These spellings are typical of the *e* and *i* omissions: *surgon* for *surgeon*, *prevaled* for *prevailed*, *ignors* for *ignores*, *forsiht* for *foresight*, and *vicous* for *vicious*. Assumption of completion (21, p. 276) caused 24 of the 113 vowel omissions, such as *therefor* for *therefore*, *hid* for *hide*, *you'r* for *you're*, *becom* for *become*, *interfer* for *interfere*, and *sinc* for *since*. Five of the consonants are not omitted once (*f*, *j*, *c*, *v*, and *z*). The letter *d* is omitted 18 times; *r*, 15; *t*, 14; *s*, 13; *h*, 13; and *n*, 11 times. Assumption of completion caused 45 of the 117 consonant omissions, such as *scaffol* for *scaffold*, *no* for *not*, *jums* for *jumps*, *corp* for *corps*, and *an* for *and*. Of the 252 omissions 22 involve two or more letters, generally composing a syllable, as in *accidently* for *accidentally*, *undoubtly* for *undoubtedly*, *swing* for *swinging*, and *cause* for *because*.

The unnecessary addition of letters causes 13.8% of the spelling difficulties. As in the vowel omissions, the letter *e* is the troublemaker in over 46% of the errors. The letter *i* is close behind with 30%. Again the letter *u* offered little difficulty. Note the additions in these words: *departiment* for *department*, *curiosity* for *curi-osity*, *studients* for *students*, *earley* for *early*, *reacient* for *recent*, *lightening* for *lightning*, and *wheather* for *whether*. The consonants *t* and *s* are the most popular insertions. Others frequently inserted are *h*, *c*, *n*, *l*, and *r*. Anticipation, which inserts letters before they are needed (21, p. 276), accounts for the addition of 16 consonants, as in *predjudice* for *prejudice*, *eduction* for *education*, *reansons* for *reasons*, and *coninciding* for *coinciding*. A group of two or

more letters was added in such words as *recognition* for *recogni-*
tion, *reliablally* for *reliably*, *thesises* for *theses*, and *sarcastism* for
sarcasm. In 22 words, students forgot to drop the *e* before adding
a suffix, and in 2 words they forgot to change the *y* to *i* before
adding a suffix. Examples are *arriveing* for *arriving*, *shiney* for
shiny, *truely* for *truly*, and *earlyer* for *earlier*. A thorough knowl-
edge of the rules suggested by Horn would have eliminated this
group of 22 errors.

TABLE 1

Classification	Number of Errors	Per Cent
1. Omission of letters other than failure to double.....	252	22.7
a. Vowels.....	113	
b. Consonants.....	117	
c. Syllables.....	22	
2. Insertion of letters other than doubling.....	153	13.8
a. Vowels.....	79	
b. Consonants.....	39	
c. Syllables.....	11	
d. Retention of the root when adding a suffix.....	24	
3. Transpositions.....	60	5.4
a. Adjacent letters.....	53	
b. Non-adjacent letters.....	7	
4. Confusions and substitutions.....	293	26.4
a. Vowels.....	217	
b. Consonants.....	76	
5. Doubling.....	126	11.3
a. Unnecessary doubling		
(1) Vowels.....	1	
(2) Consonants.....	67	
b. Failure to double		
(1) Vowels.....	1	
(2) Consonants.....	57	
6. Use of wrong word.....	160	14.4
a. Homonyms.....	99	
b. Non-homonyms.....	61	
7. Violations of rules.....	64	5.8
a. Apostrophes.....	33	
b. Compounds.....	14	
c. Hyphenates.....	5	
d. Plurals.....	12	
TOTAL.....	1,108	99.8

Transposition of letters, a mistake often found in typewriting, accounts for 5.4% of the 1,108 errors. Most of the reversed letters are adjacent. The digraphs *ei* and *ie* cause 18 of the 60 errors, such as *sceintific* for *scientific*, *liesure* for *leisure*, *thier* for *their*, *recieve* for *receive*, and *beleive* for *believe*. Other transpositions include *Peral* for *Pearl*, *aliments* for *ailments*, *strecth* for *stretch*, and *granduer* for *grandeur*.

Livingston (16) found that among elementary-school children 33% of the spelling errors were the result of confusions and substitutions. Similarly, this writer finds that among college students the greatest number of errors (26.4%) are caused by confusions and substitutions. Foran (9, p. 103) observes, "The fact that the same types of errors are found in the writing of college students as in the second grade indicates the failure of the higher grades to develop habits and ideals of accuracy." Better penmanship and more careful proofreading could have eliminated many of these errors. However, the student may not be able to decide upon the correct letter because most of the vowel errors occur in the unaccented syllables. Kenyon (14, pp. 24 and 28) gives the symbol \textcircled{O} for the sound of vowels in some of the unaccented syllables. This investigation shows that 121 incorrect vowels were used for that unaccented sound. The student has the general configuration of the word in mind, but he does not recall an exact image of each letter. He cannot rely on the pronunciation to give him the correct vowel in the unaccented syllables.

Twenty-nine errors occur in the initial vowel of the suffixes *ence*, *ance*, *ent*, *ant*, *ible*, and *able*. Some of the demons are *insistant* for *insistent*, *existance* for *existence*, *excellant* for *excellent*, *audiance* for *audience*, *accessable* for *accessible*, and *endurance* for *endurance*. An examination of any college-level spelling list will reveal a preponderance of *ent* and *ence* endings. Although most authorities in spelling discourage the use of methods in which words are grouped by similarity of elements (18, p. 53), the writer's students have been helped by grouping the *ance* and *ant* words and by learning them as a spelling unit. This is a suggested list: *appearance*, *attendance*, *brilliant*, *descendant*, *guidance*, *hesitancy*, *hindrance*, *maintenance*, *perseverance*, *remembrance*, *significant*, *vengeance*, *performance*, *pleasant*, *continuance*, and *endurance*.

The suffixes *er*, *or*, and *ar* caused trouble for 23 students. Mistakes appear in such common words as *auther* for *author*, *humer* for *humor*, *oder* for *odor*, *advisor* for *adviser*, *calibar* for *caliber*, *sobor* for *sober*, *visiters* for *visitors*, *miner* for *minor*, *vulger* for *vulgar*, and *mannar* for *manner*.

Horn (13, p. 1166) has pointed out that many times the letter *c* is confused with some other letter having the same phonetic value. Thirty-one of the students in this study might not have erred if, in 1573, dictionary writers had accepted John Barrett's suggestion that *c* be limited to its combination with *h* to spell the sound of *ch* as in *church*.

Unnecessary doubling and failure to double letters (primarily consonants) account for 11.3% of the 1,108 errors. Teachers need to emphasize the distinction between short and long vowel sounds to correct such errors as *writter* for *writer*, *stiffled* for *stified*, *dinning* for *dining*, *latter* for *later*, *shinny* for *shiny*, *writen* for *written*, and *piter pater* for *pitter patter*. We need also to give students a clear understanding of the application of the doubling rule "Words of one syllable or words of more than one syllable accented on the last, ending in a single consonant preceded by a single vowel, double the final consonant when adding a suffix beginning with a vowel." In addition, attention should be called to prefixes ending in a consonant, for example, *dis* and *mis* as in *misspelled* and *dissatisfied*.

The use of the wrong word ranks third in percentage of total errors on Table 1. Of the 160 errors, 99 are homonyms of the words intended by the students. The word *to* was mistaken for *too* 22 times. *There* and *their* were confused 14 times. Other confusions are such simple words as *our* and *are*, *new* and *knew*, *one* and *won*, *fair* and *fare*, *sight* and *cite*, *through* and *threw*, *hear* and *here*, *know* and *no*, *buy* and *by*, and *your* and *you're*. Mistakes like these might be prevented by the habit of reviewing what has been written, but one wonders whether the distinction in meanings have been learned thoroughly enough to avoid interference with freedom of expression. (9, p. 103)

Item 7, violations of rules, shows four small groups of errors which make up 5.8% of the total errors. Apostrophes are omitted in such words and expressions as *let's*, *week's work*, *Reader's Guide*, *author's opinion*, *Poole's Index*, and *friend's attitude*. Some students have failed to join compounds (*everyone*, *outfit*, *nowhere*), and others have made compounds of words that should be written singly (*in spite*, *so far*, *one another*). The hyphen is omitted in *twenty-four*, *seven-day room*, *two-cent day*, *one-sided bet*, and *out-tackle*. The rule "change *y* to *i* and add *es* to form plural" is violated in such words as *flies*, *biographies*, and *fraternities*. Other incorrect plurals are *lives* for *lives*, *shelfs* for *shelves*, *ourselvs* for *ourselves*, and *heros* for *heroes*. Again, it seems that students need more drill in rules concerning apostrophes, hyphens,

and plurals. However, careful proofreading might have corrected many of these mistakes.

Many educators have tried to determine whether emphasis on correct pronunciation might help to eliminate spelling difficulties. Mendenhall (18, p. 45) found that 51% of all errors were phonetic, and he advanced the hypothesis that mispronunciation is not a major source of error in spelling. Masters (17, p. 80) found that 64% of misspellings were phonetic spellings, 14% were approximately phonetic, and 21% were unphonetic. An examination of Table 2 reveals that 58.8% of the 1,108 errors are phonetic spellings. Looking at the "Per Cent Phonetic" column, we find that the omission of vowels does not affect the sound of the words as much as does the omission of consonants (vowels 60% phonetic and consonants 20% phonetic). The same is true for the insertion of letters (vowels 59% and consonants 23%). Of course, the omission or addition of a syllable changes the pronunciation of the word. The transposition of letters resulted in 53% phonetic spellings and 47% non-phonetic spellings. Nearly three-fourths of the vowel confusions and substitutions resulted in phonetic spellings, whereas about one-half of the interchange of consonants resulted in phonetic spellings. The violation of the doubling rule has a slight effect upon the sound of the word. Careless, inaccurate pronunciation may have caused errors like these: *migatory* for *migratory*, *quanity* for *quantity*, *enviroment* for *environment*, *wonerful* for *wonderful*, and *eletric* for *electric*.

The results of the tendency to minimize the importance of handwriting are definitely reflected in the impromptu themes on which this analysis is based. The letters *o* and *a* are frequently confused; an *i* without the dot often becomes an *e*; such letters as *m*, *n*, and *u* are hardly distinguishable at times. Spelling can be improved through greater emphasis on writing habits. Foran (9, p. 101) is of the opinion that "carelessness is very different from a complete lack of knowledge of how to spell, and could be remedied by greater insistence on careful handwriting and on the checking of what has been written."

Evidence from this study shows that we need to teach our students how to proofread. We must make them aware of the fact that time spent in reviewing what has been written is equally as important as time given to the thinking and writing. There are two processes involved in proofreading: first, reading for clarity of expression, and second, scrutinizing individual letters and marks of punctuation. Many students say they have proofread a composition

when actually they have not gone beyond the first step of reading for thought. Perhaps English teachers can take a tip from the high-school commerce teacher who had her typing students circle their own errors, and for each error left uncircled, she doubled the usual penalty. Her students soon became eagle-eyed proofreaders. Early in a composition course, the instructor should determine what "slips of the pen" might have been corrected if the student had taken time to review his work, and should then devise appropriate means of motivating the student's desire for habits of accuracy.

TABLE 2

<i>Classification</i>	<i>Per Cent Phonetic</i>	<i>Per Cent Non-Phonetic</i>
1. Omission of letters other than failure to double		
a. Vowels.....	60	40
b. Consonants.....	20	80
c. Syllables.....	....	100
2. Insertion of letters other than doubling		
a. Vowels.....	59	41
b. Consonants.....	23	77
c. Syllables.....	....	100
d. Retention of the root when adding a suffix.....	100	....
3. Transpositions		
a. Adjacent letters.....	53	47
b. Non-adjacent letters.....	....	100
4. Confusions and substitutions		
a. Vowels.....	71	29
b. Consonants.....	51	49
5. Doubling		
a. Unnecessary doubling		
(1) Vowels.....	....	100
(2) Consonants.....	84	16
b. Failure to double		
(1) Vowels.....	....	100
(2) Consonants.....	68	32
6. Use of wrong word		
a. Homonyms.....	100	....
b. Non-homonyms.....	....	100
7. Violations of rules		
a. Apostrophes.....	100	....
b. Compounds.....	100	....
c. Hyphenates.....	100	....
d. Plurals.....	100	....
651 Phonetic Errors =	58.8	
457 Non-Phonetic Errors =		41.2

SUMMARY

1. The confusion and omission of letters cause 50% of the spelling difficulties among college freshmen.
2. About 30% of the errors are caused by the use of the wrong word and by the insertion of letters other than doubling.
3. Unnecessary doubling and failure to double caused 11% of the spelling errors.
4. Transpositions caused 5% of the errors, and apostrophes, compounds, hyphenates, and plurals account for another 5%.
5. More than 58% of the misspellings are phonetic spellings. Over 9% are homonyms.
6. The letter *e* causes more trouble than any other letter. Difficulty definitely resides with the letters *c, d, i, h, n, r, s,* and *t*.
7. Syllabication and distinct enunciation would have corrected most of the errors in the addition or omission of consonants and syllables.
8. The application of certain rules (suffixes, doubling, compound adjectives, plurals, and the possessive case) would have eliminated approximately 20% of the errors.
9. There is a definite need for higher ideals of accuracy.

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